

The Open Mike^{District 2}

A Newsletter From Councilman **Mike Knapp**

Volume 2, Number 10

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

December 2006

A Moment at the Mike

Hit The Ground Running

When the County Council returned to session in December, there were four new faces at the dais in Rockville. Four years ago, I was one of those new faces, so I can attest how it feels to sit down in your seat for the first time and think *this is it, here we go* and that's about all you've got the time for before you hit the ground running. We're off and running again just as quickly this year -- the new Council has already met once, and we'll meet again on December 12 before taking a brief recess. We'll be back in January, and I'm looking forward to getting to work.

If you count heads, you'll see that the new council will have two new At-Large members, Duchy Trachtenberg and Mark Elrich. At-Large members are elected countywide, not just by a district. That gives them a lot of ground to cover. There are also two new district councilmembers, Valerie Ervin, representing District 5, and Roger Berliner, representing District 1. There are countless issues and projects to learn and manage not just in District 2, but countywide--and a big part of my job involves making certain that Upcounty issues are well-articulated and understood by the Council.



Councilmember Knapp

At the Council's December 5 session, the County Council elected its officers for the coming session. Councilmember Praisner was chosen as President, and I was honored to be elected the Council's Vice President. I look forward to helping build consensus on the long list of issues we'll face in the coming year. As always, if there's something you want to ensure the council knows about, or if you're advocating for a particular cause, I want to make certain we work together to bring our concerns to the attention of the right people. Sometimes that means putting you in touch with government agencies, and other times it means getting you in front of me or other Councilmembers. I'm here to help facilitate any such meeting. And, of course, you can always write or talk to me as well. Drop me a line and let me know what you're thinking. It's my pleasure to serve.

Have a safe and pleasant holiday season!

Regards,

Mike Knapp
Councilmember, District 2

Council Unanimously Approves Verizon Franchise; Knapp Demands Timeline for Rollout in Poolesville

On November 28, the County Council unanimously approved the franchise agreement that will allow [Verizon](#) to provide cable television services in Montgomery County. As a staunch believer in competition, I am thrilled that Montgomery County residents will at last have a choice of cable and internet providers. I'm pleased both the County and Verizon were at last able to put our disagreements, and potential lawsuits, behind us and negotiate an agreement.

Under the agreement, service will be rolled out in four service areas over four years. In the Initial Service Area—which includes Germantown, Damascus, Chevy Chase, Friendship Heights, Burtonsville, Cloverly and parts of Silver Spring—Verizon must offer cable service to at least 50 percent of the area within 12 months. In the Middle Service Area—Takoma Park, Rockville, Twinbrook, and Silver Spring—Verizon must offer cable to at least 50 percent of the area within three years. The third area, the Extended Service Area—Olney, Gaithersburg, and parts of Potomac and Aspen Hill—will require Verizon to offer service in 50 percent of the area within four years.



It was with the fourth Service Area, as it was originally negotiated, that I had some heartburn. Initially, there was no definite timeline for providing service in the Poolesville region. Frankly, that was a deal-breaker, in my view. While I've been a long time advocate for the kind of competition Verizon would provide, there are residents in Poolesville, and in other remote parts of the Upcounty, who presently have *no options for cable service at all*. From the beginning, then, I have insisted that any new franchise must provide services to areas like Poolesville and other remote parts of the County.

Consequently, the final franchise agreement provides that as soon as Verizon attains 75,000 subscribers across the County, it must offer cable services to *all* residences in the Poolesville region within three years. I'm pleased we were able to insert a hard timeline, instead of the more nebulous non-committal language, to ensure Verizon would bring its services to these parts of the County. And I appreciate the efforts of Councilwoman Praisner for helping make this agreement possible.

Contact Me



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"Green Building" Legislation Enacted By Council



The County Council unanimously approved new "Green Building" legislation on November 28. This legislation (Bill 17-06) requires County-built or funded non-residential buildings to achieve a LEED silver rating (33-38 points) and require private non-residential or multi-family residential buildings to achieve a LEED certified rating (26-32 points).

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System was developed by the [United States Green Buildings Council](#). LEED is a nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: (1) sustainable

site development; (2) water savings; (3) energy efficiency; (4) materials selection; and (5) indoor environmental quality. For more information on LEED and LEED ratings, [click here](#).

A LEED certified building, for example, is built to conserve energy and water, reduce emissions, and reduce the amount of waste that is sent to landfills. Such buildings have lower energy and heating costs, and have a significantly lower impact on the environment.

Buildings covered by the requirements would include any newly constructed or extensively modified non-residential or multi-family residential buildings with at least 10,000 square feet of gross floor area. The effective date for private buildings would be November 28, 2007, and would apply to public buildings with design funding in the FY 2008 Capital Improvements Program.

The Upcounty Road Scholar

Blunt Road Closed for Repairs for Four Weeks

Got a road that needs repairing? A traffic light that's out? Is there a street or intersection that you think needs a stop sign or crosswalk? One of my responsibilities is to make sure someone knows about it -- and to do what I can to get you information on your question or request as quickly as possible.

I stay in regular contact with the [Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation](#) (DPWT) and the [Maryland State Highways Administration](#) (MSHA), and provide each agency with a list of projects that need addressing in the Upcounty. Both agencies receive countless requests each week, and getting a response back can take some time. So bear with me -- if you don't see a particular project listed here, that doesn't mean it has been forgotten or neglected, but rather that I haven't received an updated report on its progress this month.

With this in mind, the Road Scholar section of *The Open Mike* provides an opportunity to give you the latest information received from DPWT, MSHA, and others on the progress of requests that have been submitted on your behalf. It's also an opportunity for you to [let me know](#) of other projects that may need to be undertaken in your community.

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Upcounty Road Scholar (continued from page 3)

Department of Public Works and Transportation

Last week, I received the following announcement from DPWT Director Art Holmes that he asked I pass on to readers of *The Open Mike*:

Blunt Road Closure: "During the recent rain and wind storms, a pipe culvert and adjacent roadway embankment failed on Blunt Road midway between Brink Road and Watkins Mill Road (ADC Map 10-C-11). Consequently, we must close Blunt Road for approximately four weeks to replace and upgrade the pipe culverts and reconstruct the failed section of roadway. We are currently scheduled to close Brink Road on December 11, 2006.

"We will be informing local residents, Emergency Operations Center, Traffic Management Center, and transportation for public schools. Additionally, we will post information on our web site, and will also post signs."

Park Planned For Darnestown Square

Public Meeting Will Be Held on December 14 at Darnestown UPC

The [Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission](#) (M-NCPPC), Montgomery County Department of Parks invites the public to participate in a meeting on Thursday, December 14 at 7:30 p.m. to review options and ideas for a new park in the [Darnestown](#) Square area of Montgomery County. The discussion on the new park will be presented as a part of the [Darnestown Civic Association](#) Town Hall Meeting in the [Darnestown United Presbyterian Church](#) at the intersection of Turkey Foot Road and Darnestown Road.

Participants at the meeting will review options and ideas for the development of a park on a 0.6-acre area located at 14019 Darnestown Road.

Department of Parks' staff begins the process of developing a new park by meeting with neighbors and any interested parties. Staff will obtain input from the community on preliminary design options and ideas for historical interpretation of local heritage. Site conditions, park activity needs and details of the preliminary plans will be presented and discussed. Information gained from the community will be used to refine and finalize the design for the park.

The park facility plan and cost estimate will be presented to the Montgomery County Planning Board for approval when the staff draft plan is completed. Public comment on the overall project will be heard at that time. A recommendation to change the park name from Darnestown Square Urban Park to Darnestown



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Darnestown *(continued from page 4)*

Square Heritage Park will also be proposed. If the recommended plan is approved, the project will then be included in the future Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget for funding of final design and construction.

Comments in writing or more information may be obtained by contacting Heidi Sussmann, RLA, Project Manager, M-NCPPC, Parkside Headquarters, 9500 Brunett Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20901, phone: 301/495-2547; email: heidi.sussmann@mncppc-mc.org.

Vox Pops

Voices From Around the Upcounty Community

A Note from Mike: I receive countless phone calls, e-mails, and letters each day. Most are passionate, many are frustrated, and a few are downright funny...but all of them are thoughtful and well-intended. I think readers of The Open Mike will be interested to hear what their Upcounty neighbors have to say, whether they're across the street or across the county. With that in mind, the "Vox Pops" section of my newsletter features highlights from some of the correspondence and phone calls I've received in my office over the past month.

Readers Respond: "Can We Really Reduce Congestion?"



Mass Transit Is Overrated

"I would guess political 'peer pressure' is probably masking and preventing real solutions to congestion. For instance, the studies I have seen indicate that mass transit, while the most politically popular, is dollar for dollar by far the least efficient way to reduce congestion. It is only effective in the densest of situations, where the inconvenience of driving clearly outweighs the inconvenience and inefficiency of mass transit. Unfortunately, I understand that it is nearly impossible for people to let go of the belief that mass transit is a good solution, but in virtually all cases where it is being looked at, it is not the best use of dollars.

"In the immediate term all of this comes down to allocating limited financial resources in a way that makes real improvement in congestion on a wide scale. For the long term, the underlying problem is bad planning - and like it or not, while the mixed use aspect of smart growth planning is good, the densification aspect of smart growth planning is going to make the problem worse.

"The most cost effective, wide reaching, immediate and fair solutions to be implemented for congestion are these: (1) Clogged arteries, including arterials with failing intersections, must be converted to electronic toll roads. Scanners go on every vehicle as part of registration. (2) Powerful tax incentives must be put in place for the widespread development and use of cottage office space throughout Washington metropolitan suburbia. (3) These two actions, especially the first, are by far the most cost effective and time effective means to achieve massive trip reduction on existing clogged roadways. The problem is so big that whatever politician pushes through massive, noticeable improvement within a short time frame, will be in a position to affect permanent change and good planning for the future." – Joe

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Vox Pops (continued from page 5)

Federal Contracts Force Commuting

"The one problem that this does not address is how much of the workforce in the WMA area works on federal contracts which tend to have short life spans 1-4 years. I have worked for the same company for 25 years and worked in Manassas, Newington, Herndon, Bethesda, Rockville and Gaithersburg. My company works hard to move contracts to people and not people to contracts, but the federal government wants employees collocated with their agency. I do not want to buy and sell houses with each move and pull my kids from their schools, so we are forced to commute." -- *Kyle*

Congestion Actually Benefits the Upcounty

"I have been visiting candidates websites today to try to review everyone's positions before voting. I suppose election day is the worst possible day to write to a candidate to express an opinion, but I cannot help but write to you and say how utterly opposed I am to your pro growth position for Montgomery County. The reason we live in my part of District 2, Mike, is to get away from the highways, metro stations, condos and highrises that are turning so much of the county into a city. The last thing we need is more jobs, more housing, more roads, more people, more urbanization.



"This county has long thrived on a combination of residential use as a bedroom community for Washington, and an agricultural area. We live here because that is what we want. Traffic congestion is our friend, if it discourages more development. I commute into DC from Darnestown every day. If I sit in traffic this is my choice. I am glad to do so if it discourages those who will not accept an hour's commute from moving out here. Those who do not want to do so can readily relocate elsewhere, in a region with virtually full employment. Shortening commutes will only attract more people to live here, soon bringing commuting time right back to where it is now, the only difference being that tens of millions of dollars will have been wasted on new roads and the countryside will have been devastated. Why spend taxpayer money subsidizing selfish decisions, at the expense of the environment?



"Unfortunately, your opponent seems no better than you on the issues that matter most to me -- it is choice between tweedledum and tweedledee. I will be working to get a real choice in candidates for the next election! In the meantime, just be aware that some of us are very very disappointed in your position, which seems utterly incomprehensible on the merits. I would be interested to know where your motivation lies" -- *Mitzi*

Applause for The Open Mike

"I really enjoy your Council e-mail news letter. It is a great public service. Thank you. You have the courage to actually let the citizens in on what's going on in a county where we are taxed to death. The least the County can do is let us in on it. Thanks again." -- *Robert*

The Open Mike Wants to Know . . .

What Makes You Crazy?

In the coming year, I'd like to start a new feature in *The Open Mike* -- so new I don't even have a name planned for it yet -- where we highlight those little quirks in government that make residents crazy. Is there a regulation, a law, paperwork or a process that's annoying you, confusing you, or just plain got you scratching your head?

I want to know about it so I can help fix it. Here are two real-life examples, just to give you an idea of the kinds of things I'm talking about:

- An Upcounty resident regularly has his blue recycling bins pulverized by passing traffic because the emptied bins are placed in the roadway.
- Streetlights in an Upcounty community don't match because the county will only maintain one kind of streetlight, while longstanding planning documents and the neighborhood's own HOA regulations require another.

Those aren't earth-shattering problems, but they're enough to make you pull out your hair. And they cost the county -- and ultimately *you* -- money. But your government needs to be here to help you, not confuse you, bog you down in process, or . . . well, pulverize your recycling bins.

What is it in county government that makes you crazy? [Drop me a line](#) and let me know.

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The Open Mike Wants You!

Are you sponsoring an event or having a meeting, and want to invite residents from around the county to participate? Did you or your organization win an award? If you have information you'd like to submit for possible inclusion in an upcoming issue of *The Open Mike*, please e-mail us at Councilmember.Knapp@montgomerycountymd.gov and let us know, or call at (240) 777-7955.

County Council Public Hearings Calendar

Input Sought on Building Moratorium Legislation

Don't be shy! The County Council regularly holds public hearings at which we actively seek your input, thoughts, comments, and suggestions. The policies, amendments, and legislation under consideration aren't just pieces of paper; they have a very real impact on you and the lives of your fellow citizens. For this reason, residents are always encouraged to attend the public hearings and give us your views.

Hearings are held in the Council's main meeting room on the 7th Floor of the County Office Building at 100 Maryland Avenue in Rockville. If you wish to testify on any of the items listed below, please call (240) 777-7931.

One more thing -- the hearing schedule can change rapidly, so always check the [County Council's home page](#) to get the most up-to-date information.

DATE	TIME	MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION
December 12	11:30 p.m.	Supplemental Appropriation to the County Government's FY2007 Operating Budget: - MCFRS: \$20,000 for Urban Areas Security Initiative
	11:30 p.m.	Supplemental Appropriation to the County Government's FY 2007 Operating Budget: - DHHS and DOP: \$1,974,460 for Maryland Regional Gang Prevention Initiative - Community Grants NDA: \$360,000 for Takoma Park Community Center, Phase III
January 16, 2007	7:30 p.m.	Subdivision Regulation Amendment 06-03: Preliminary Subdivision Plans - Approvals - Applicability of Growth Policy Amendments
January 17, 2007	11:30 p.m.	Special Appropriation to the County Government's FY07 Operating Budget: - DOCR: \$759,730 for Detention Services-MCCF



Councilmember Mike Knapp and his staff wish you a safe and happy holiday. We'll see you in January 2007.